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In the extreme eastern part of France, tranquilly reposing almost midway between the mountainous Vosges and the Black Forest and hugging the rapidly flowing Rhine with seemingly jealous fervor, is the city of Strasbourg. Apparently predestined to the costly glories as well as the adversities and vicissitudes of military order, this city has veritably lived up to its traditional origin. On this very soil Drusus, fifteen hundred years before the birth of Christ, established a fortified post in the name of the Roman people, with the object of stemming the increasing hostile raids of the savage and incursive Alains, Vandals, and Sarmades who inhabited the land beyond the Rhine. But despite the fact that it has been the center of the

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arena in which grim-visaged war has played many a leading role, it has progressively developed into one of the most active commercial, industrial, artistic, and educational centers of Europe. Because of its unique geographical position, i. e., at the borders of two rival civilizations, willingly or not, it has always been enriched by the acculturation of one or the other of the two great nations with which it has been alternately united; and it is this extraordinary but harmonious commingling of the rich Teutonic and Celtic qualities that gives Alsace and its great center Strasbourg its characteristic and unique beauty. Far famed as the originator of sauerkraut, renowned for its inimitable *pâté de foie gras*, and celebrated for the magnificent beauty and stately Gothic purity of its imposing cathedral, this great center has indeed a rightful and deserving place among the first cities of the world.

But of all of its proud possessions there is none it could display with more pardonable pride than its great University, for here modestly resides one of the world's most advanced centers of education. And no part of this University is more progressive or has a nobler inheritance than the medical school. Constructed on the same grounds and as an integral part of "Hospices Civil," consisting of over fifty buildings, covering over seventy acres of ground, possessing its own electric power, water, and heating system, it is indeed a little

city within itself forming one of the world's largest medical centers.

So old is this hospital and so vague are the early records that its origin is lost in antiquity. However, it may be said with some degree of authenticity that it was founded about the year 657 A. D., probably by the Duc d'Alsace Attic or Ettichon, the father of Saint Odile, and was administered by the bishops until the year 1263. At this time the administration of the hospital was given to the city by Bishop Henri de Gérold sack, and fifty years later the hospital was transferred outside the city boundary to its present site. In 1716 it was almost completely destroyed by fire, only the chapel of Saint Evard escaping, which, incidentally, dates back to the fifteenth century and remains yet a monumental commemoration of the admirable courage and unwavering determination of these early workers.

With its reconstruction came a new epoch in the advancement of the medical school which became better organized, more firmly established, and began its rapid strides of progress and development. The chairs of pathology, anatomy and surgery were definitely assigned, and here was founded in 1734 the first school of midwifery in the world. From this time until 1870 it continued to advance rapidly and flourish under the ever productive influence of the French school. During the German epoch from 1870 to 1918, the great zeal and

feverish activity that was displayed in enlarging and enhancing the hospital and university has resulted in making it one of the largest medical centers of the world today. To attempt a further detailed historical and descriptive discussion of the hospital and university would be inopportune as well as inexpedient. As our interest is admittedly confined, we may risk being invidious and limit the description to one of the most conspicuously advanced and scientifically progressive departments, namely, the "Clinique Chirurgicale A". It may be parenthetically stated that the surgical department consists of two divisions: "Clinique Chirurgicale A" and "Clinique Chirurgicale B," but we are solely concerned with the former.

The present edifice of "Clinique Chirurgicale A" was completed in 1881 and contains 205 beds. Constructed in simple style with large spacious hallways and vast airy wards, it possesses two operating pavilions, one of which is provided with a huge amphitheater; modernly equipped laboratories of surgical pathology and experimental surgery, its own department of radiology, an out-patient clinic, a urologic department, and a separate building devoted to septic cases.

However, our interest in this clinic is aroused not by its modern facilities or its simple style of construction, but by the man who modestly works and presides as its director. Celebrated throughout the surgical world for

his prolific and fructiferous activities, his unceasing originality of thought, his numerous perspicuous disquisitions, and his perennial expositions on the surgery of the sympathetic nervous system, Professor René Leriche has made this clinic a cynosure for students from all corners of the world.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF LERICHE

In order to appreciate more fully the quality of his work it is necessary to know and appreciate the personality of this really great man, and to do this it would not be inappropriate to give a brief biographical resumé. Born on October 12, 1879, at Roanne, France, he completed his early medical training at the University of Lyon and immediately became the student of Jaboulay, who was early attracted by the unusual ability of this young interne. However, Jaboulay's untimely and tragic death occurred soon afterwards and he then became the student and later the collaborator of that master surgeon, Antonin Poncet, until the latter's death in 1913. It was under such careful training and in such a brilliant environment that the firm foundation for his later development and success was laid. At the termination of his internship in 1906 he presented his thesis: "The Resection of the Stomach for Cancer", which remains yet a classic, and in 1910 he became Professor Agrégé. During the late War he devoted his entire time to military surgery and as a result of his self-sacrificing and distinguished services, both the French and Belgian Governments

bestowed on him one of their highest honors. After the World War he returned to Lyon and remained there until 1924, when he was called to Strasbourg to occupy the chair of surgery, which had recently been left vacant by the untimely death of Sencert, and on which had previously sat such illustrious figures as Flamant, Cailliot, Begin, Sedillot, Madelung, and Boeckel.

Since his establishment here he has continued to add many achievements to his numerous innovations and advances that are so characteristic of his surgical enterprise, veritably conforming to the exordial remarks of his inaugural address in which he stated: "Vous ne me connaissez pas. J'avais besoin de prendre contact avec vous autrement qu'en paroles. J'ai préféré que vous me jugiez d'abord aux actes."

No better insight can be obtained to his sterling qualities, his innate character, and his idealistic attitude, than to quote him again from this same eloquent address: "Le professeur de clinique chirurgicale a une triple tâche à remplir. Il doit soigner de son mieux les malades qui lui sont confiés; il doit apprendre aux étudiants tout ce que peut leur être utile dans leur vie professionnelle future; il doit enfin tâcher de faire progresser la chirurgie. L'avenir me permettra, je l'espère, de vous le montrer." And he has indeed, for he has achieved these three idealistic tasks in his own characteristically modest but undeniably successful manner.

The generous personality of Professor René Leriche is clearly revealed by his noble and imposing Beethovenian countenance. The high forehead, the clear blue, kind, but penetrating eyes, and the strong, determined chin vividly portray and reflect his keen sense of humor, his effervescing vivacity, his beneficent cordiality, his contagious enthusiasm, and his indomitable resoluteness. The reassuring confidence and the understanding sympathy expressed at the patient's bedside is only commensurate with his unlimited tolerance and patient consideration towards his students. The spirit of camaraderie among his assistants, residents, and internes, the prevailing atmosphere of enthusiasm in his clinic, and the worshipful admiration of his patients vividly exemplify the charming personality and the admirable characteristics of this great man.

It is in his clinical lectures that he impressively demonstrates his incomparable ability as a masterful teacher. Although capable of beautiful oratorical eloquence, before his students he speaks in a concise and transpicuous manner harmoniously blending scientific simplicity with pleasing rhetoric. With explicit clarity he lucidly correlates the underlying pathologic physiology with the more obvious clinical manifestations, indelibly impressing in the minds of his students these essential and fundamental surgical principles.

In the operating theater which is finished in

an agreeable ensemble of pale blue, one is strikingly impressed by the sheer simplicity as well as the technical perfection of the delicate operative manipulations of this master surgeon. Although a better demonstration of more dexterous or less injurious dissection on the living subject would be difficult to conceive, he more forcibly stresses the primary essentials of modern surgery, that the present day surgeon must no longer be content with being a mere technician. He must attempt to correct the consequent manifestations of the patient's disorders by first a thorough study and a comprehensive correlation of the underlying pathologic anatomy with physiologic function. And this statement so aptly illustrates the thorough manner in which each patient in his clinic is carefully studied in an attempt to discover the relative importance of the basic physiologic and pathologic processes, and thus ascertain the best corrective measures.

The philosophic dissertations, the experimental contributions, and the surgical expositions and monographs of Professor Leriche are too numerous to list, and cover an astonishingly wide range of surgical endeavor. In all his work there is one outstanding characteristic which portrays the ideal and trend of modern surgery—the continuous search for a more ratiocinative comprehension of the physiologic disorders consequent to the more apparent anatomico-pathologic processes.

Leriche's earlier publications were chiefly

concerned with abdominal surgery, especially that of the stomach. His keen analytical and experimental work has added considerably towards a more rational conception and a better therapeutic attack of peptic ulceration. In collaboration with his former chief, Antonin Poncet, he published a masterful dissertation on surgical tuberculosis. His invaluable contributions on vascular diseases and surgery of the sympathetic nervous system have made his name inseparably linked with this branch of surgical endeavor. As early as 1913 he directed the attention of surgeons throughout the world to the operative procedure of periarterial sympathectomy as a means of improving the circulation of a limb in the treatment of certain conditions consequent to vascular insufficiency. As the procedure was found also to relieve pain, it was quickly and widely adopted before a more rational understanding of the underlying physiologic principles was developed. Naturally the results have been most varied and confusing and Professor Leriche himself, writing in the September issue (1928) of the *Annals of Surgery*, succinctly and truthfully expressed the present status: "The surgery of the sympathetic system meets two kinds of difficulties—those which spring from our physiologic ignorance, those which spring from our pathologic ignorance. On one side we do not know the exact significance of the branches we cut, on the other side we are ignorant, as a rule, of

the cause and the exact mechanism of the diseases we wish to cure."

Not long after the late War, his constantly probing scientific interests were directed toward the histo-biologic development of the osseous structures, which resulted in a newer conception of ossification. In collaboration with Policard he presented these more advanced ideas in a compendious and illuminating monograph, "*La physiologie de l'os normal et pathologique*", which shed considerable light on this difficult problem, and opened new sources of possibilities in its therapeutic application.

He has recently become intensely interested in studies of the endocrine glands, particularly the adrenals and the parathyroids, with special reference to their surgical consideration. His studious and perspicacious clinical and experimental investigations have already made him one of the foremost authorities in this newer field of surgical inquiry.

The world-wide appreciation of the untiring industry, the unceasing efforts, and the ever-productive activities of Professor René Leriche are readily evinced by the numerous and deserving honors which have been conferred upon him. Respected by his colleagues, admired by his associates, worshipped by his patients, he will always remain in the hearts of those who know him best, his surgical devotees, as a tolerant teacher and a kind and inspiring master.

And when the pages of this chapter of medical history have been completed, his name will appear conspicuously among those who have done most towards advancing modern surgical progress.